

Environmental Contributions to the Obesity Epidemic



- Food availability
- Passive overeating
- High fat diets
- Current lifestyles that discourage physical activity

Environmental Contributions to the Obesity Epidemic

“Although genetics has a modest influence on obesity, by far the largest amount of difference in body weight is due to the environment”

“Genetics permits a person to become obese, but environment determines if a person becomes obese.

Michael Goran, Ph. D.
University of Alabama

Factors Related to the Onset of Obesity

- Altered dietary intake
- Decreased physical activity
- Increased inactivity



Shifts in Food Practices in the United States

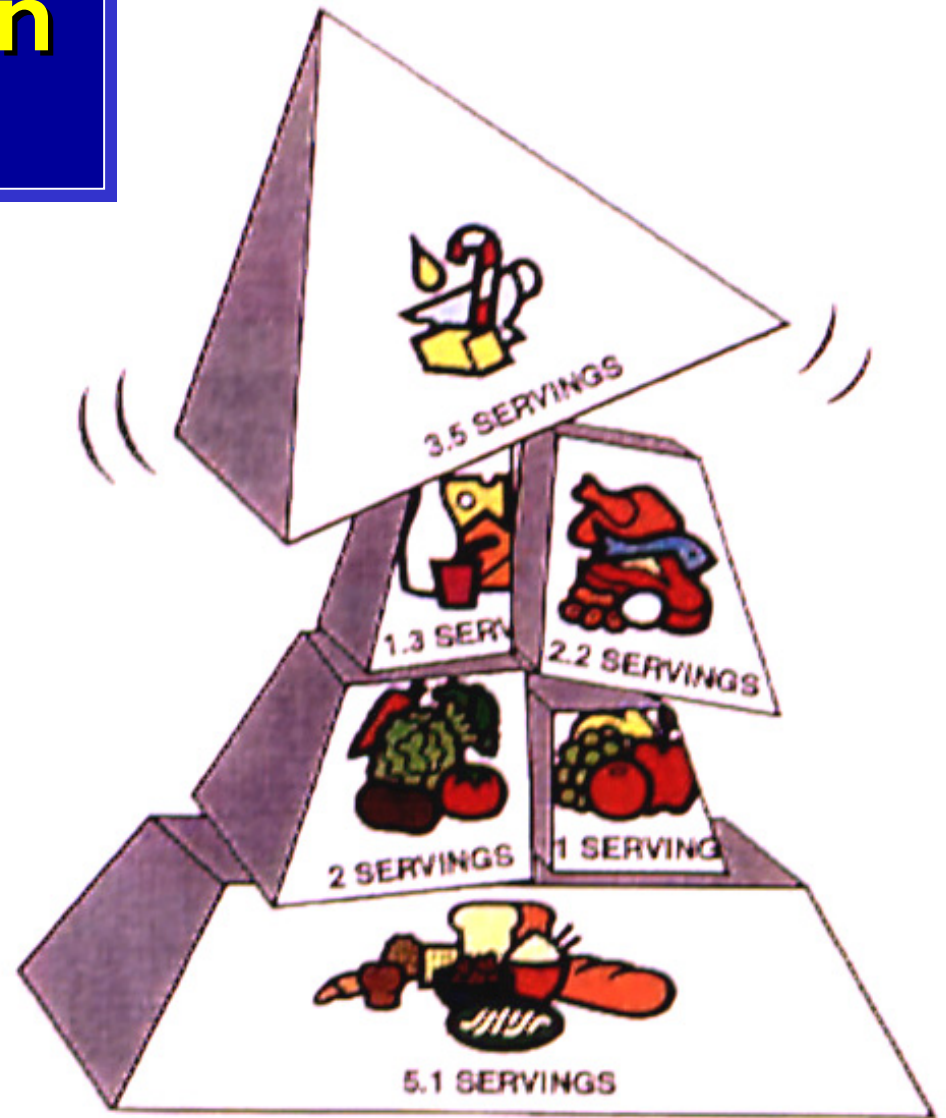
- Use of the microwave
- Fast food consumption
- Consumption of soft drinks - increased from 27 to 44 gal/y from 1972-92
- 30,000 products in supermarkets (doubled since 1981)
- 12,000 new food products/year (doubled since 1986)



Shifts in Food Practices in the United States (cont.)

- Increasing portion sizes
 - (restaurant standard plate size has increased from 10½ inches to 12 inches)
- Most people are not aware that common portion sizes have increased
 - (62% in a recent survey said that portions served restaurants were the same size or smaller than 10 years ago)
- The “Clean Plate Club syndrome”
 - (26% of Americans say that the amount they eat depends on the amount they are served)

Actual Consumption Pyramid U.S. Total



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Factors Relating to Decreased Activity

- Decrease in daily walking, increased vehicle use
- Safety concerns
- Decrease in Physical Education
- Convenience culture

Daily Physical Education Classes in School (9-12th graders)

• Year	• %
• 1990-91	• 42%
• 1997	• 27%

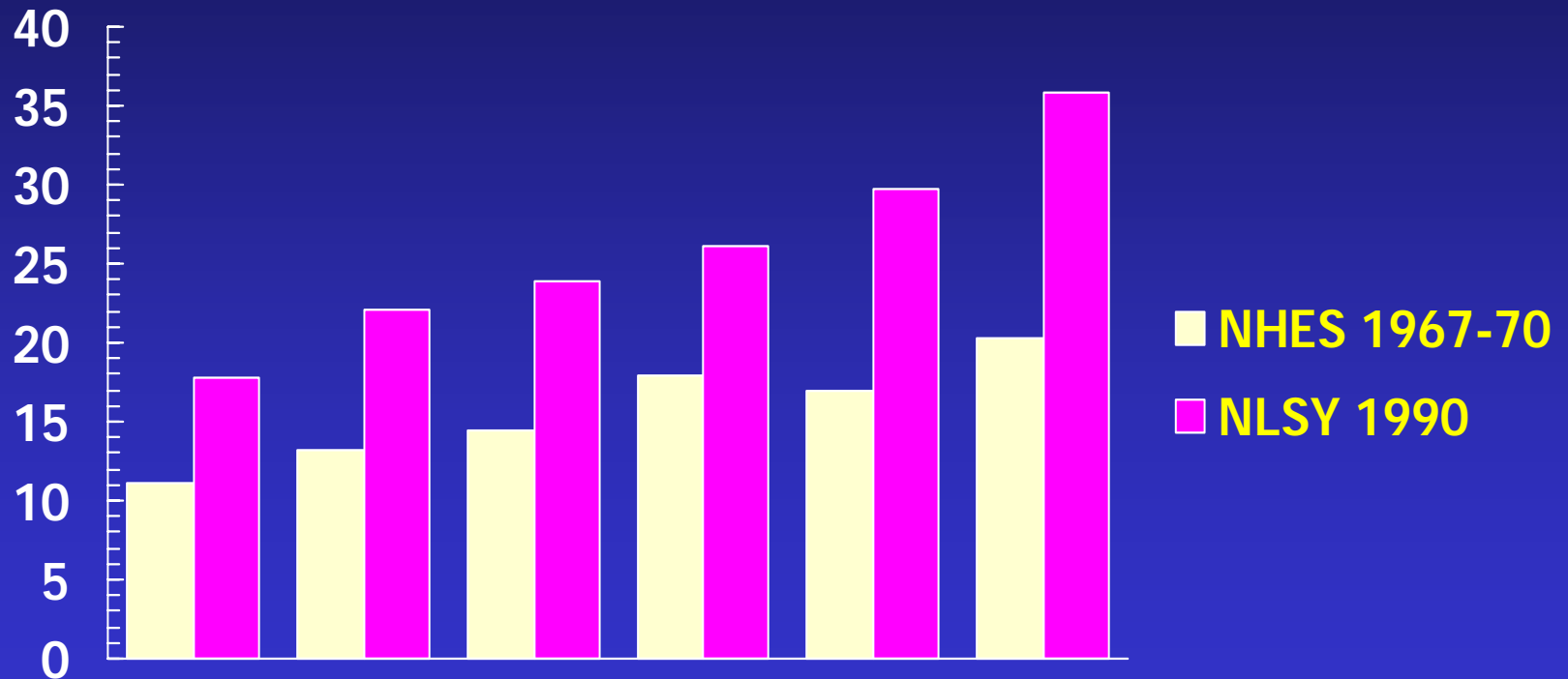
Factors Relating to Increased Inactivity

- Electronic games
- TV
- Computer use
- Convenience culture

Prevalence of Obesity by Hours of TV per Day:

NHES Youth Aged 12-17 in 1967-70 and NLSY Youth Aged 10-15 in 1990

Prevalence
(%)



TV Hours Per Day (Youth Report)